

the first chapter in the book under review. In the course of his duty, FWC had learnt of several ways to intercept tigers (so to speak), both while on their nocturnal hunts as also in their diurnal lairs! So taking a day off once, he had mounted on his favourite elephant Balmati in the company of his wife Judy, when shortly before mid-day, Judy nudged FWC to indicate a tiger which sighting provided the following timeless description, more vivid than any visual can ever be:

*"He lay, twelve yards away from us, with his mouth open, his sides heaving, yawning occasionally, sometime rolling right over on his side and sometime holding his head up, until his eyes began gradually to close with sleep. Every now and then he opened his eyes and looked at us, but always came to the conclusion that we were harmless, if somewhat boring, intruders who were disturbing his afternoon nap. He stayed there for perhaps a quarter of an hour, during which time we exposed all the Plates we had, gradually going closer and closer until the last Plate was exposed at a little under ten yards range ... One simple shot, and all the life and movement would have gone from that beautiful striped body and could never be brought back again."* FWC was never to falter from that latter conviction. For sure, not all ventures were as peaceful because there were at least two occasions (once with a tusker and another an enraged tiger), when the thought uppermost with FWC was *"how will I face my father-in-law should their only child come to harm!"*

Lest the reader be misled that FWC was exclusively tiger-centric, let me state that the book is a rich repository

of the varied riches of our living jungles, from elephants to squirrels, Indian Wild Dog to vultures, Leopard to Blackbuck, Sloth Bear to butterflies and so on. Even more significant is the message that emerges from each text that wildlife and their habitats are among our beautiful heritage, which we must preserve. And in the context of our times, when the Tiger is prized explicitly for its skin, whiskers, flesh, claws, and bones, the book will be an invaluable motivator in the hands of both the young and old. Besides, there are two illustrations in the book which deserve to be pointed out. The frontispiece carries a charcoal portrait of Balmati and her mahout Karim Baksh, so riveting that one simply cannot have enough of it. In addition, each chapter closes with the image of a tiny perched bird, a Coal Tit which FWC photographed at age 17 which enriched his pocket-money by six shillings, in prize money!

We Indians shall remain indebted to FWC for his pioneering and persuasive advocacy of creating National Parks in India (similar to those in the USA and South Africa), which led first to the enactment of National Parks Act of 1935, and a year later, the creation of the Hailey National Park, today's prestigious Corbett Tiger Reserve. None of this may have been possible but for the enthusiastic support of the visionary Governor of the United Province, Sir Malcolm Hailey. The latter then became the Viceroy of India, which was a fateful conjunction of lucky stars for India's wildlife.

■ LT. GEN.(RETD.) BALJIT SINGH

3. MARINE MAMMAL SPECIES OF INDIA by E. Vivekanandan and R. Jayabaskaran. Published by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR), Kochi, 2012. 228 pp. Size: 24 cm x 17 cm, Hardbound. Price not mentioned.

The activities of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), as the name suggests, are related to monitoring, developing, and exploiting marine fisheries resources. Although marine mammals do not fall within this scope, the CMFRI has gathered much information on this group of animals over the years. This information, until recently, was primarily related to whale and dugong strandings, and to non-targeted catches of dolphins and finless porpoises by fisheries.

Recently, CMFRI completed a more active effort to study marine mammals. It surveyed parts of the Indian Ocean, and associated seas, through a series of cruises. And now the organization has produced the book under review. The stated objective of this work is to 'create interest and awareness among students, researchers, naturalists, and conservationists on marine mammals occurring in the Indian seas'.

Accounts of 26 species, constituting a section named

'Species Profile', make up the major part of the book. A brief introduction and a nine-page chapter titled 'Distribution of Cetaceans in the Indian EEZ and Contiguous Seas' precede this section. A chapter, also brief, titled 'Future Directions' ends the main text of the book.

The chapter on the distribution of cetaceans in the Indian EEZ is not a comprehensive review as one expects from the title, but is devoted to the findings of the CMFRI's marine mammal survey. Notwithstanding this, it is a significant component of the book because it is essentially a presentation of the findings of this extended survey, which were not available outside CMFRI. In this section, the authors have listed the species observed by them (from October 2003 to November 2011), along with details of abundance. They have determined the 'productivity' of each month of the year — that of February, with 1.01 sightings per day, was highest, while August was least rewarding, with 0.02 sightings per

day. The authors have also related their sightings data to water depth, sea surface temperature, and water salinity. All this is valuable information. The spatial distribution of the sightings is not presented in this section. This appears to be a serious omission because the overriding question in one's mind then is "where in our seas are marine mammals found?" As it happens, species-wise maps are provided for the cetacean surveys during 2003–2011, but in the next section.

In the set of species accounts, the authors have included only marine mammal species that have been recorded from India. A few other species have been recorded from the waters of adjacent countries and may be expected to be found in India in the future, but these have been excluded. The authors explain that they have not included the Sei Whale, which has been recorded a number of times in India, because these records have been shown to be misidentifications. But curiously, at the same time, they have included the Fin Whale. This species too has been recorded many times in Indian waters, but some scientists pointed out that none of the records from the entire northern Indian Ocean are really verifiable.

The species accounts provide information under the following heads: taxonomy, common names, identification characters, distribution, abundance, habitat, behaviour, food, exploitation and threats, and conservation status. A table of stranding and sighting records from India has been provided for each species. And under the respective species accounts

are the aforesaid maps. With the maps in their present locations, all known records (those of the CMFRI survey as well as past records of other observers) could have been marked on them.

The species accounts and the book in general are profusely illustrated with colour photographs. They lend a certain deep blue theme to the volume. A number of the pictures give rise to a feeling that they have been digitally enhanced somewhat enthusiastically. There is something 'flat' about the Dugong on the beach on p. 177. The Dwarf Sperm Whales on pp. 71 and 73 appear identical, although the one seems to be lying on a sandy stretch and the other is in some other situation. Similarly, the Pygmy Killer Whale on p. 89 is uncannily like the one on p. 91.

The chapter on future directions recommends that a marine mammal stranding network be set up in India. Efforts to achieve this have been continuing for some years, starting with a workshop that was conducted at the CMFRI. The chapter also recommends that a marine mammal conservation network and a database devoted to marine mammals be created. These have been in existence for five years.

Much effort has gone into making this book suited also for popular reading. It is hard bound and well-produced. It will be of interest to the more technically inclined naturalist. The CMFRI could bring out such publications on other groups of animals as well.

■ KUMARAN SATHASIVAM

